

Winter Blues

When the days are shorter and colder do you get the Winter Blues? Do you have trouble waking up? Are you fatigued, even after a good night's sleep? Are you irritated more easily? Have difficulty controlling food cravings? Do you have problems concentrating at work or on relationships? If so, you may be one of the millions of people who suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD): changes in mood and behavior due to seasonal changes, such as feeling depressed in winter. The good news is that you don't have to continue feeling this way.

Light Therapy:

The lack of light in the wintertime causes chemical imbalances in the brain. Melatonin, a sleep-related hormone is produced at increased levels in the dark. Therefore, when the days are shorter and darker the production of this hormone increases causing symptoms of SAD.

- ❑ How to get more light in your day:
 - Add more light to your day with the use of a light therapy box (5000-10,000LUX). Light therapy is effective for about 85% of SAD cases. The preferred level of light is about as bright as a spring morning on a clear day and for most people sitting in front of a lightbox, allowing the light to reach the eyes, for between 15 and 45 minutes daily will be sufficient to alleviate the symptoms. The light must be suitably bright. At least 2500lux (lux is the technical measure of brightness) is needed, which is five times brighter than a well-lit office (a normal living room might be as low as 100lux); brighter lights up to 10,000lux work quicker.
 - Schedule a 30-minute walk outside every day-no matter what the weather.
 - Arrange homes/workplaces to add sunlight.
 - Schedule 5-10 minute "light" breaks throughout the day. This includes sitting in front of a bright window with the sun streaming in or going outside.

Other treatments for winter blues include :

- ❑ Participate in regular exercise.
- ❑ Breathe deeply a couple of minutes a day to restore energy to sluggish cells.
- ❑ Spend quality time with friends and family (do not isolate yourself from others).
- ❑ Schedule hobby time, take a class or acquire a new skill.
- ❑ Maintain a consistent sleep-wake schedule.
- ❑ Reduce alcohol use, it's a depressant and will worsen the situation.
- ❑ Laugh and make room for humor.
- ❑ Plan a sunshine filled winter vacation.
- ❑ Surprise a gloomy friend with bright-red tulips, sweet-scented hyacinths or cheery daffodils. These early-flowering bulbs chase dark clouds away with their bright-colored petals and gentle spring scent.
- ❑ Aromatherapy -- Different scents can bring about different moods. Peppermint, for example may lift your spirit, while lavender and chamomile may have a soothing effect.

- ❑ Crank up the music. Whatever makes you feel happy and brings back good memories.
- ❑ Muscle Relaxation. Sitting comfortably in a chair, make a fist with your hands. Hold the tension for 10 seconds and then relax. Do the same thing with the biceps. Raise both arms and create tension. Work your way up to your face and forehead and then down to your chest and belly, and then down to your legs and to your toes. Create and hold tension in all the major muscle groups. When you are finish you will feel more relaxed in just a couple of minutes.

IF SYMPTOMS PERSIST, SEE YOUR DOCTOR

Recipe of the Month

Black Bean Casserole

Ingredients

2 cups chopped onion
 1 ½ cups chopped green pepper
 1 can tomatoes (14.5 ounces)
 ¾ cup picante sauce
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 2 teaspoons ground cumin
 2 cans black beans (drained and rinsed)
 10 corn tortillas (7 inch)
 2 cups grated Monterey Jack cheese (8 ounces)
 Fresh shredded Lettuce
 Fresh red chili peppers (optional)

Directions

In a large skillet combine onion, green pepper, undrained tomatoes, picante sauce, garlic, and cumin. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Stir in beans.

Spray a 2-quart rectangular baking dish with nonstick coating. Spread one-third of the bean mixture over bottom of the dish. Top with half of the tortillas, overlapping as necessary, and half of the cheese. Add another one-third of the bean mixture, then remaining tortillas and bean mixture. Cover and bake in a 350 degree oven for 35 to 40 minutes or until heated through. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Let stand for 10 minutes. If desired, place some shredded lettuce on each serving plate. To serve, cut casserole into squares and place atop lettuce. Garnish with chili peppers, if desired. Makes 6 to 8 main-dish servings.

Nutritional Information

Nutritional facts per serving
calories: 248, total fat: 4g, saturated fat: 1g, cholesterol: 0mg, carbohydrate:
40g, fiber: 5g, protein: 15g

Unit of the Month

January's Unit of the Month is MSO Anchorage. MSO Anchorage's wellness initiative uses the Personal Wellness Profile (PWP) results to set personal and unit health and wellness goals for the New Year. In November unit members completed the PWP (questionnaire, fitness assessments, blood pressure and cholesterol) at their annual safety stand-down. It is not surprising that MSO Anchorage is using the PWP results to set not only personal health goals but unit health goals as well. For the last year the MSO has participated in unit PT three times a week and participated in quarterly unit PT testing. PO Joseph Kulp and PO Darrel Wieland (the Unit's Health Promotion Coordinators) work individually with members who struggle to meet minimum standards. Individual fitness scores have improved dramatically during the quarterly PT testing. Congratulations to MSO Anchorage for emphasizing the importance of health and fitness every day. It really shows when you visit MSO Anchorage that the command supports a positive healthy environment. Keep up the great work MSO!

Special thanks to Nancy Henry, Health Promotion Manager at ISC Ketchikan, for writing the Health Promotion Bulletin this month.



mailto: TSchneider@COMDT.uscg.mil



(202) 267-6624



(202) 267-4798



mailto: NHenry@CGAlaska.uscg.mil



(907) 463-2126



(907) 463-2131